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ABSTRACT

The undergraduate curriculum of the Stillman School of Business at Seton Hall University, New Jersey, was evaluated. The objective was to ascertain views of the curriculum of 246 senior students of the class of 1977, 187 alumni of the class of 1976, 45 faculty members, and 6 chairmen. Open-ended questionnaires were administered to the six department chairmen; closed-ended questionnaires plus requests for comments were administered to students and alumni, who were asked to rate each course and various aspects of the curriculum on a three-point scale. A majority of senior students and first-year alumni evaluated the curriculum as only of average or limited effectiveness. A need for increased teaching effectiveness, consistency and better integration of course work, relevancy, workstudy/internship program, application of theoretical concepts, increased computer usage, consistency of grading and examination practices, and improved course counseling and placement was identified from student and alumni responses. Faculty members and chairmen were generally satisfied with the curriculum. It is concluded that there is a need to provide for a more coherent program of business education and general education rather than distribution requirements, free electives, and disjointed required courses in the business core. (SW)

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An Evaluation of the Undergraduate Curriculum in Business Administration at Seton Hall University*

By: Antoinette J. Messina, M.B.A., M.A., Ed.D.**

Introduction

This study is an evaluation of the undergraduate curriculum of the Stillman School of Business at Seton Hall University. It is the first major study of the total curriculum since the establishment of the School in 1950. The purpose of the study was to ascertain how 246 senior students of the class of 1977, 187 alumni of the class of 1976, 45 faculty and 6 chairmen view the curriculum. The study was focused upon such problem areas in the curriculum as: philosophy, required business core courses, required liberal arts core courses, major courses, free electives, curriculum design, supervision and evaluation, library adequacy and usage, University services and facilities, student activities, and grading and examinations.

Procedure

Questionnaires for this survey were designed by the researcher. Open-ended questionnaires relating to the curriculum were administered to the chairmen of the six departments: Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management and Industrial Relations, Marketing, and Quantitative Analysis. Only one of the department

* A doctoral dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Education (Department of Social and Philosophical Foundations). The complete study is available at Rutgers University in New Brunswick and University Microfilm.

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chairmen did not respond, but among the full-time faculty, the response rate was only 53 percent, indicating a low interest level or lack of information about the curriculum outside their specialties. Demographic data on the faculty were also collected and evaluated, such as highest degree held, source of highest degree, years of service, and tenure. The questionnaire administered to senior students and alumni of the class of 1976 were identical except for minor variations in the personal data sheet. The response rate for the seniors was 50 percent and 43 percent for the alumni of the class of 1976. The questionnaire was predominantly closed-ended, using a three point scale, although each curriculum section included requests for comments and suggestions. The seniors and alumni were asked to rate each course (except for the free elective courses), and various aspects of the curriculum on a three-point scale as follows: highly effective, needed more emphasis (3); of average effectiveness, satisfactory as presently conducted (2); of limited effectiveness, needed less emphasis (1). The ratings were weighted for statistical treatment. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to determine anydifferences in the population. The curriculum data were analyzed through t-tests in order to determine if there was a significant difference between the two populations, senior students and first-year alumni. Significance was determined at the .05 level. Some seniors were administered the questionnaire during the class session of the last year course,

Business Policy (BA 14), and others were reached by two mailings. All alumni were reached by three mailings and followed up with a random sampling of telephone calls. Their response rate was 43 percent.

Whereas 21 percent of the seniors responded to the questionnaire in class and 29 percent responded by mail, separate analysis of the two groups seniors and alumni was made to determine if there was any significant difference in their response. Using the SPSS, with a t-test analysis, there was no significant difference between the two senior groups. Therefore, the seniors who responded were treated as a single group for comparison with the first-year alumni. Since the Accounting Department and Marketing Department accounted for 76 percent of all business majors in the class of 1977, and 79 percent of business majors in the class of 1976, a separate analysis of the two populations was performed. There was no significant difference using the SPSS with a t-test analysis.

Findings

The analysis revealed no significant difference between the senior students and first-year alumni. The findings reveal that a majority evaluated the curriculum as only of average or limited in effectiveness. Respondents followed the same relative pattern emphasizing need for increased teaching effectiveness, consistency and better integration of course work, relevancy, work study/ internship program, application of theoretical concepts, increased computer usage, consistency of grading and examination practices, and improved course counseling and placement. In contrast, the

findings reveal that the faculty and chairmen were generally satisfied with the curriculum, although there is only one non-faculty course counselor, no supervision and evaluation of faculty, no formal program in assigning faculty teaching core courses, no cohesion and unity of faculty, and faculty complaints about the library services and collection. Moreover, the business faculty and the faculty of Arts and Sciences have no formal administrative structure to coordinate the teaching of courses to busines students. There is also no formal liaison with the School of Education faculty for those students enrolled in business education.

After 30 years the faculty of Harvard University has rediscovered general education. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences approved a proposal by Dean Henry Rosovsky to replace the current incoherent curriculum with a more structured "core curriculum" designed to guarantee that every Harvard graduate will possess "basic literacy in major forms of intellectual discourse." Broadly speaking Dean Rosovsky explained that the core curriculum is trying to do the same thing today that general education did 25 years ago.

The resurgence of interest in general education since 1975 is not limited to Harvard. Institutions such as Amherst, Middlebury College, Cornell, Stanford and Johns Hopkins are also studying or revising their curricula in a search for reform which will end the incoherence of undergraduate education found in the fragmented electives so prevalent during the 1960's. A curriculum that is narrow in focus and skill oriented does not develop powers for meeting students' business and citizenship needs, or those of an

educated person. Preparation solely in skills and specialty is temporary and restrictive in societies of accelerating change. However, an integrated program of specialized courses supported by a broad rich, and relevant general education will provide an education of sustaining value to citizens in a free and complex society.

Conclusions

A need exists at the Stillman School of Business at Seton Hall University to provide for a more coherent program of business education and general education rather than distribution requirements, free electives and disjointed required courses in the business core. The present curriculum does not meet the goals and objectives of seniors and first-year alumni. Responding chairmen and faculty were less critical of the curriculum than these two groups.

Recommendations

In place of a fragmented-separate list of courses and faculty entrenched in their specialties, it is recommended from the findings that the curriculum be revised to include the following: (1) interdepartmental coordination for curriculum development, (2) courses designed for general education rather than the cafeteria approach in Arts and Sciences, (3) revisions in the content and teaching practices in the culminating seminar course Business Policy, (4) elimination of duplicate subject matter in courses, particularly between economics and finance, (5) establishment of a practicum and seminar course for each major

along with a work/study internship program. Some further recommendations focused on incorporating a system of periodic faculty supervision and evaluation, improving grading and examinations practices, instituting periodic workshops for faculty development, instituting a program for faculty counseling of students, improving placement services, improving library facilities and programs, appointment of a Director of Institutional Research who will maintain and upgrade statistical information about the Unoversity and conduct studies, updating and improving computer facilities and usage in courses, initiating a Tutorial Program, and recruitment of full-time faculty to reduce the heavy dependence on adjunct staff and high percentage (79 percent) of faculty educated in the East.